



The VCU T/TAC is a grant-funded program of the Virginia Department of Education and the Virginia Institute for Developmental Disabilities (VIDD). VCU is an EEO/AA Institution and does not discriminate on the basis of race, gender, age, religion, ethnic origin, or disability. The primary purpose of the T/TAC system is to provide improved educational opportunities and contribute to the success of children and youth with disabilities (birth to 22 years) and children who have disadvantages or are at risk for school failure (birth to nine years).

# Update

Virginia Commonwealth University  
Training & Technical Assistance Center  
(VCU T/TAC)

Spring 2002

Volume 5 Number 2

## 6 UPDATE

V.5 N.2 MAY 2002

### IST Spells Success for Chase City Elementary School

Carol Bowman, Instructional Support Teacher  
Hilda Puryear, Principal  
*Chase City Elementary School*

Chase City Elementary School is located in the western half of Mecklenburg County, in Southside Virginia. Historically, Southside Virginia is an area known for its low socioeconomic status and the many problems associated with a lack of resources. The mission of Chase City Elementary School is to provide educational opportunities for pre-kindergarten through fifth grade students, despite the economic, educational, and social barriers of the region.

To overcome these barriers, the staff at Chase City Elementary School has developed a vision focused on *sharing, growing, and succeeding together!* Whereas, in the past, the prevailing attitude demonstrated by teachers focused on what the child lacked, now teachers are focusing on what the child knows. This change in attitude has revolutionized Chase City Elementary School. The school celebrates learning and reaching goals. The students wear buttons that say it best: "Ask me what I learned today."

In September of 2000, Chase City Elementary School applied for a grant from the Virginia Department of Education to develop an Instructional Support Team.

This grant was awarded in December, and the principal, Mrs. Hilda Puryear, immediately set in motion the steps needed to establish a successful program. An Instructional Support Team (IST) teacher was selected and team members considered. The Virginia Department of Education and two nationally recognized consultants, Dr. Ed Gickling and Dr. Todd Gravois, provided monthly training, materials, and practice in the components of the IST model. While some schools chose to send only the IST Teacher to the training sessions, Chase City believed the team would be more successful if all team members attended the training. By the end of the 2000-2001 school year, all team members, including the principal, assistant principal, the guidance counselor, the reading specialist, a fifth grade teacher, a special education teacher, and a third grade teacher were trained in consultation, collaboration, and problem solving skills, as well as in curriculum based assessment practices. Based on teacher referrals, from February until May of 2001, opportunities were offered for team members to practice IST skills with students and their teachers. During the summer of 2001, Carol Bowman, the IST teacher, received Facilitator Training that was essential to developing a complete program.

The 2001-2002 school year has been an exciting time for the team. With the support of the faculty, many strategies for improving math, reading, writing, and spelling have been shared and implemented. Teachers continue to work together to solve problems that arise when there is a mismatch between the instruction or the curriculum and student abilities. The IST model allows professionals to work together to promote student achievement through precise classroom-based assessments and collaborative problem solving. A shift is being made from "changing the child" to "adjusting the instruction."

The IST team meets once weekly to review cases and to support case managers with suggestions, praise, and encouragement. Celebrations about improved work or attitudes—what the child can do—are more common than complaints about what the child cannot do. Enabling a struggling student to become a proud student is achieved by team involvement and the recognition of improvement. The IST model is a success at Chase City Elementary School because its faculty uses precise classroom-based assessment and collaborates to make appropriate changes in instruction and curriculum.